

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BEIRUT 03240 01 OF 02 080907Z
ACTION SS-25

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O R 080750Z JUL 77
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4502
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMEMBASSY CAIRO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BEIRUT 3240
EXDIS
E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PBOR PDEV LE IS PLO SY SA KU
SUBJ: BOUTROS ON LEBANON'S DILEMMAS

REF: A) BEIRUT 3204, B) TEL AVIV 4817

1. SUMMARY: FOREIGN MINISTER BOUTROS SEES NO POSSIBLE SOLUTION TO THE PRESENT IMBROGLIO IN THE SOUTH. THE GOL IS POWERLESS TO DO ANYTHING ABOUT IT, AND LEBANON'S CHRISTIANS ARE TAKING AN INTRANSIGENT AND UNREALISTIC ATTITUDE WHICH SUGGESTS THAT THEY HOPE FOR SUPPORT FROM ANOTHER QUARTER. LIKEWISE ON THE CAIRO ACCORD, HE SEES NO POSSIBLE SOLUTION, OUTSIDE OF AN OVERALL MIDDLE EAST SETTLEMENT. HE WELCOMES THE POSSIBILITY OF SUBSTANTIAL U.S. MILITARY (CREDIT) ASSISTANCE TO LEBANON. HE IS CONTINUING HIS TOUR OF ARAB CAPITALS, BUT HAS NO HOPE THAT ARAB ATTITUDES WILL CHANGE IN WAYS WHICH WILL FAVORABLY AFFECT EITHER SOUTH LEBANON OR THE QUESTION OF PALESTINIAN STATUS IN LEBANON. END SUMMARY.

2. I CALLED ON FOREIGN MINISTER BOUTROS JULY 7 AT HIS REQUEST, TOGETHER WITH EMBASSY POLITICAL OFFICER
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MOLINEAUX. HE WANTED TO DISCUSS AMONG OTHER THINGS SITUATION IN SOUTH LEBANON.

3. CHRISTIAN LEBANESE ROLE IN SOUTH LEBANON. I TOLD BOUTROS I HAD ALREADY DISCUSSED WITH PIERRE GEMAYEL POSSIBILITIES FOR A CEASE-FIRE IN THE SOUTH (REF A), AND WOULD BE IN TOUCH LATER IN DAY WITH CAMILLE

CHAMOUN. I THEN BRIEFED HIM ON ISRAELI ATTITUDES TOWARDS A CEASE-FIRE (REF B). HE TOOK PARTICULAR NOTE OF ISRAELI INTEREST IN KNOWING MORE ABOUT DETAILS. I SAID THAT, SINCE OUR LAST MEETING, I HAD ALSO DISCUSSED IDEA OF A CEASE-FIRE IN THE SOUTH WITH BOTH SAEB SALAM AND KAMAL ASSAD, NOTING THAT ASSAD IN PARTICULAR WAS CONCERNED THAT, SHOULD PALESTINIANS WITHDRAW FROM BORDER AREA, ISRAELIS MIGHT MOVE IN.

4. I THEN ASKED BOUTROS IF IN LIGHT ALL THIS GOL FORESAW A POSSIBILITY OF A VIABLE CEASE-FIRE. BOUTROS SAID NEITHER PHALANGE NOR NLP HAS CONTROL OF SITUATION IN SOUTH. FIGHTING LEBANESE ELEMENTS IN SOUTH HAVE BECOME "ALLIES AND HOSTAGES" OF ISRAEL. HE SAW NO POSSIBLE SOLUTION TO PRESENT PROBLEM AT ALL, GIVEN THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF SENDING REGULAR LEBANESE ARMY TROOPS TO THE SOUTH. GIVEN ARMY'S PRESENT WEAKENED CONDITION, IT WOULD IMMEDIATELY SPLIT ON ISSUE OF CONFRONTING ONE SIDE OR THE OTHER IN THE SOUTH. THERE WAS NO WAY THAT GOL COULD CONTROL EVENTS THERE. HE ALSO DOUBTED IT POSSIBLE HAVE CREDIBLE ASSURANCES THAT PALESTINIANS WOULD RESPECT CEASE-FIRE. I SUGGESTED TO BOUTROS IDEA THAT A TOKEN LEBANESE FORCE IN THE SOUTH MIGHT BE SUFFICIENT, WITH THREAT OF ISRAELI INTERVENTION AS SOBERING INFLUENCE ON PALESTINIANS. WE BOTH AGREED THAT THIS WAS A VERY COMPLICATED POSSIBILITY. I TOLD CONFIDENTIAL

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BOUTROS THAT THE DEPARTMENT WAS GENERALLY SKEPTICAL OF KAMAL ASSAD'S IDEA THAT THE PALESTINIANS COULD BE PERSUADED TO MOVE VOLUNTARILY TO THE ARQUB.

5. I ASKED BOUTROS ABOUT POSSIBILITY OF A PULL-BACK BY BOTH PALESTINIAN AND "LEBANESE FRONT" FORCES FROM BORDER AREA, REPLACING THEM WITH AN INTERNATIONAL FORCE. BOUTROS AGREED THIS WAS A POSSIBILITY, BUT SAID THAT ITS PRACTICAL EFFECT WOULD BE TO CONCEDE MOST OF SOUTH LEBANON (BETWEEN SUCH INTERNATIONAL FORCES AND PRESENT SOUTHERNMOST DEPLOYMENT OF SYRIAN ASF) TO PALESTINIAN CONTROL (THE SAME POINT I MADE TO HIM TWO WEEKS AGO). HE SHOWED ME A DETAILED MAP OF THE SOUTH INDICATING THAT, NORTH OF THE RED LINE, THE PALESTINIANS EXERCISED EFFECTIVE CONTROL ONLY IN SIDON, BUT THAT THEY HAD SEVERAL VERY LARGE AREAS OF PREDOMINANCE SOUTH OF THE LINE. HE THOUGHT IDEA OF INTERNATIONAL FORCES WOULD BE IN LEBANON'S INTEREST ONLY IF THE ISRAELIS AGREED THAT THE SYRIAN ASF COULD MOVE FURTHER SOUTHWARD TO COVER THE AREA NORTH OF THEM. HE WONDERED IF THIS WAS POSSIBLE, AND "ASKED WITHOUT ASKING" FOR AN INFORMAL READING ON U.S. ATTITUDE TOWARDS THIS IDEA. I AGREED TO

TRY TO FIND OUT.

6. MEANWHILE, I SAID, IF THERE WERE TO BE A CEASE-FIRE, I THOUGHT ISRAELIS WOULD PROBABLY COOPERATE. HE RESPONDED BY NOTING THAT THE GOL WAS NOT IN A POSITION TO IMPLEMENT OR GUARANTEE SUCH A CEASE-FIRE.

7. I MENTIONED TO BOUTROS THAT WE GATHERED THERE HAD BEEN RECENT REPORTS IN THE WORLD PRESS OF SYRIAN TROOPS MOVING TO SOUTH LEBANON. HE HAD NO INFORMATION ON THE SUBJECT. I TOLD HIM THE REPORTS MAY HAVE REFERRED TO RECENT DEPLOYMENTS OF SAIQA ELEMENTS TO THE SOUTH. HE NOTED WITH A WINK THAT OFFICIALLY SAIQA WAS A PALESTINIAN ORGANIZATION.

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EXDIS

8. CHRISTIAN POLITICAL ATTITUDES. BOUTROS SAID LEBANESE CHRISTIANS HAD CONVINCED THEMSELVES THAT THEY HAD BEEN DECEIVED BY ATTITUDES OF ARAB STATES, WHO HAD GUARANTEED APPLICATION OF THE CAIRO ACCORD. THEY WERE ACCORDINGLY TAKING AN OPPOSITIONAL ATTITUDE TOWARD

THE GOVERNMENT, BUT, HE WONDERED, WHAT SUBSTITUTE COULD THERE BE FOR CONFIDENCE IN THE ARABS? HE HOPED THE U.S. COULD PLAY A ROLE IN PERSUADING THE CHRISTIANS THAT THEY HAD TO DEPEND ON THE ARABS, LIKE IT OR NOT. I SAID I WOULD TRY DISCUSS THIS WITH CHAMOUN LATER THE SAME DAY. BOUTROS SAID THE CHRISTIANS HAD PUT THEMSELVES IN A "DILEMMA." HE THOUGHT THEY HAD NO REAL UNDERSTANDING OF THE REGIONAL FACTORS AFFECTING LEBANON'S PRESENT SITUATION, AND SAID HE HAD NO COMPREHENSION OF THEIR INTRANSIGENCE, UNLESS THEY WERE THINKING OF SOME ALTERNATIVE TO RELIANCE ON THE ARAB WORLD. HE SAID THAT THE IDEA OF SOME CHRISTIANS TO RELY ON ISRAEL FOR EXTERNAL SUPPORT WOULD BE DISASTROUS, AND WOULD RESULT IN 100 YEARS OF ALIENATION FROM THE ARAB WORLD.

9. APPLICATION OF THE CAIRO ACCORD. BOUTROS SAID
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IT WAS PRESENTLY IMPOSSIBLE THAT THE CAIRO ACCORD MIGHT BE ENFORCED MILITARILY, "FOR A LOT OF REASONS." I AGREED. HE ASKED IF THERE WAS ANY ALTERNATIVE TO POLITICAL RELIANCE ON THE ARAB COUNTRIES. I SAID I THOUGHT NOT AND SUGGESTED THAT THERE APPEARED LIKEWISE TO BE LITTLE CHANCE OF LEBANESE-PALESTINIAN POLITICAL SOLUTION AT PRESENT. SAUDI AMBASSADOR HAD RECENTLY TOLD ME THAT AFTER MUCH FUTILE ARGUING OVER TEXTS ARAFAT FINALLY MADE IT CLEAR HE WOULD NOT GIVE UP AN INDEPENDENT PALESTINIAN FORCE IN LEBANON, I.E., THAT HE WOULD NOT IMPLEMENT THE CAIRO ACCORD. IN THE PALESTINIAN VIEW, ASKING THE SYRIANS TO ASSURE PALESTINIAN SECURITY (FROM THE CHRISTIANS) IN LEBANON WAS LIKE PUTTING THE WOLF IN CHARGE OF THE SHEEP. FURTHER, NEITHER PIERRE GEMAYEL NOR CAMILLE CHAMOUN SEEMED TO HAVE ANY CONFIDENCE AT ALL IN THE POSSIBILITY OF A DIRECT LEBANESE POLITICAL UNDERSTANDING WITH THE PALESTINIANS. WE BOTH AGREED THERE WAS NO VISIBLE SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM AT THE PRESENT TIME. I POINTED OUT, HOWEVER, THAT THE USG WAS WORKING FOR AN OVERALL MIDDLE EAST SETTLEMENT, WHICH WOULD CERTAINLY HAVE A FAVORABLE EFFECT ON PALESTINIAN STATUS IN LEBANON AND GAVE HIM RECENT EVANS AND NOVAK ARTICLE ON SUBJECT.

10. GENEVA CONFERENCE. BOUTROS ASKED IF THERE WAS INDEED GOING TO BE A CONFERENCE. I TOLD HIM I THOUGHT PROBABLY SO, BUT THAT THE PROBLEM OF PALESTINIAN REPRESENTATION WAS STILL TO BE SETTLED. HE ASKED FOR MY ASSESSMENT OF CHANCES OF SUCCESSFULLY RESOLVING THAT PROBLEM, AND I SAID I PERSONALLY THOUGHT THERE WAS AT LEAST AN EVEN CHANCE, BUT ANY SPECULATION IN THAT RESPECT WAS PREMATURE BEFORE WE KNEW OUTCOME OF MEETINGS

BETWEEN ISRAELI PRIME MINISTER BEGIN AND PRESIDENT
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CARTER IN WASHINGTON LATER THIS MONTH.

11. BOUTROS ASKED ABOUT PRESS REPORTS OF A POSSIBLE ONE HUNDRED MILLION DOLLAR U.S. MILITARY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM FOR LEBANON. (I GAVE HIM A COPY OF THE NEW YORK TIMES ARTICLE BY GWERTZMAN.) I TOLD HIM WE HAD PROPOSED PROGRAM TO SENATE AND RUN INTO OPPOSITION. CERTAIN SENATORS WERE RAISING OBJECTIONS. HE READ GWERTZMAN ARTICLE AND SAID HE DID NOT THINK SENATORS NEEDED TO WORRY ABOUT LEBANESE USING ARMS AGAINST OTHER COUNTRIES OR ABOUT OUR BECOMING MILITARILY INVOLVED HERE. I TOLD BOUTROS IT WAS MY FEELING THAT THE ISRAELIS WOULD NOT OPPOSE A U.S. MILITARY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM TO LEBANON (HE AGREED) AND THAT I THOUGHT ARAB STATES GENERALLY WOULD SUPPORT IT. BOUTROS SAID HE THOUGHT EGYPT IN PARTICULAR WOULD ENTHUSIASTICALLY SUPPORT PROGRAM AND THAT SYRIA MIGHT OBJECT FOR THE PUBLIC RECORD, BUT WOULD PRIVATELY ALSO SUPPORT IT. I TOLD BOUTROS THAT WE ASSUMED GOL UNDERSTOOD WE WERE NOT UNDERTAKING A LONG-TERM COMMITMENT, AND HE NODDED HIS ASSENT.

12. BOUTROS' VISITS TO CAIRO AND RIYADH. BOUTROS SAID THAT HIS TWO VISITS RECENTLY TO EGYPT AND SAUDI ARABIA HAD NOT BEEN VERY SUCCESSFUL. HE WAS GOING OFF TO KUWAIT IN A FEW DAYS BECAUSE KUWAITIS WOULD BE OFFENDED IF HE DID NOT, BUT SAID HE ALREADY KNEW IN ADVANCE WHAT TO EXPECT. KUWAITIS, LIKE THE OTHERS, WOULD TELL HIM FIRST STEP WAS FOR LEBANESE TO SETTLE THEIR INTERNAL PROBLEMS. HE HAD NOT DISCUSSED AID WITH SAUDIS, BUT LATTER HAD SAID THEY WOULD DO WHAT THEY COULD TO HELP.

13. ACTION REQUESTED. REQUEST DEPARTMENT'S COMMENTS ON BOUTROS' QUERY (PARA 5) ON ISRAELI ATTITUDE TOWARDS DEPLOYMENT OF SYRIAN ASF SOUTHWARD IN EVENT THAT A NON-
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ARAB INTERNATIONAL FORCE COULD BE ORGANIZED TO SECURE
LEBANESE-ISRAELI BORDER.
PARKER

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